



Money, Family, Murder

Timothy Patten

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Money, Family, Murder is a quick and enjoyable read for those looking for a thriller full of intrigue and action.

In a fast-moving, dramatic thriller, the rich and successful family man Johnny Barnes is framed for murder, and must race against the clock to clear his name. Moving through various parts of high society, Johnny travels from Newport Beach to Fargo, North Dakota, to Key Biscayne, Florida, and back again as he struggles to piece together the web of deception surrounding his family's fortune and scandalous secrets. Timothy Patten's *Money, Family, Murder* delivers with its strong pacing, likable hero, and excellent rhythm.

Almost as soon as young, beautiful Eva Piolinsky is found dead, Johnny is arrested on charges of murder. Eva, the bookkeeper for the wealthy Newport Beach McGinty family, had more than one secret to hide, including shady dealings with the management of Johnny's wife's funds. Released on a \$20 million bail, Johnny must take the investigation into his own hands in order to clear his name before others—including an ambitious DA, an aggressive police officer, and treacherous family members—can tighten the noose around his neck.

From Johnny's initial arrest and release, *Money, Family, Murder* moves quickly forward, with rising stakes and no break in action. The short chapters, as well as occasional changes in perspective, build momentum that only increases until the book's final confrontation and climax. Johnny remains an active protagonist throughout, not content to sit back and hope for justice, but not so unscrupulous that he becomes the mirror image of those who set him up in the first place. He follows the trail of his family's finances, occasionally bending the rules or concealing his identity to investigate, but never resorting to violence or treachery. The other characters that populate the book are intriguing and well-rounded, including the ruthless DA Janice Martland, who even in her darkest ambitions is believable and—just barely—sympathetic.

The plot seems to stretch credibility a few times, as when Johnny, traveling to Fargo, North Dakota, early on, agrees to go hunting with a few men he just met. It seems unlikely that a man trying to clear his name of a murder charge would agree to something so suspicious and distracting, especially given the length of time he intended to remain in Fargo. However, these moments do not detract from the overall narrative, and Patten weaves a believable tale about family finances, trusts, and investments that add a layer of credibility to his thriller.

Money, Family, Murder is a quick and enjoyable read for those looking for a thriller full of intrigue and action. Patten's book is a tightly plotted, intriguing look at the high-society world of one family that manages to rally in the face of evil, and confront one of their darkest threats head-on.

STEPHANIE BUCKLIN (June 12, 2015)

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